

*spirit* of the man, the moral ray emitted by him, whether it be like a miasm or like a blessing. Have we not felt that it was good to be with some people, that there was a moral and spiritual quickening in the contact with them, an uplifting, an inspiration, a benediction? And is not the approach of some others like an east wind, or like a fog, a frost, chilling and depressing the spirit, and setting every instinct of affinity on the defensive? What makes the difference? Is it not well to inquire what "manner of spirit" we are of, whether it is wholesome, or diseased, a depression or an inspiration, a bane or a blessing?

## The Sunday School

### LESSON FOR AUG. 20

(Editorial.)

The River of Salvation.—Ezekiel 47: 1-12.

*Golden Text* :—Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Rev. 22: 17.

*Lesson Thought* :—The source of salvation is God thru Christ.

#### Home Readings

The River of Salvation. Ezek. 47: 1-12.

Streams in the Desert. Isa. 35.

A Miraculous Supply. II Kings 3: 9-20.

Living Waters. Zech. 14: 4-11.

The River of God. Psalm 65.

A Free Gift. Rev. 21: 1-7.

Water of Life. Rev. 22: 1-7.

#### Introduction

This prophecy was delivered about fifteen years after the prophecy of the last lesson concerning the "Dry Bones." It was the twenty-fifth year of Ezekiel's captivity. Today's lesson is only a part of the prophecy which deals especially with the re-establishment of God's kingdom on the earth. It is set in four visions, given in chapters 40-48. While a little difficult to understand, yet the vision teaches a very beautiful lesson, comforting and encouraging. From it we learn the final triumphs of the kingdom of God, and also that it is a gradual process. As the river enlarges on its way to the sea, so the river of salvation grows, enlarges and spreads blessings and joy everywhere.

#### Meaning of the Text

Verse 1. The time referred to is after the angel had shown Ezekiel the temple in all its magnificence and detail. The house is the temple itself. "There is a fountain connected with the temple hill, the waters of which fell into the valley east of the city, and made their way toward the sea." They issued from beneath the south-east corner, flowed along the south of the porch which projected into the inner court, and close by the altar of sacrifice. The truth represented is that all our blessings have their source in the presence of God. The spiritual blessings which enrich the world have their source, not *in* the church but in God *thru* the church, as the waters flowed underneath the temple. Not the temple, but God's presence in the temple.

2. Ezekiel had seen the temple in all its grandeur and magnificence, but the mysterious source of these waters was a revelation to him, and he could now see that the temple with all its measuring proportions and gorgeous ritual was nevertheless not the *source* of the spiritual blessings which enrich Israel. The source was in God, but came to the people thru the temple, just as they now come thru the church.

5. The waters took an eastern course toward the Kidron, thence toward the Jordan and into the sea. The stream gradually enlarged until it became a river. The figure must not be pressed too far. The exact distances or measurements have no special significance. "The main point in the picture is the rapid argumentation from a petty stream into a mighty river, not by the influx of side streams, but by its own self supply from the sacred miraculous source in the Temple." The interpretation may symbolize the different periods of church history in the first century, the growth of the kingdom, both in numbers and spiritual power. Primarily the figure applied to the renewal of the kingdom of Israel after the return from exile, tho small and insignificant in its beginning, would by God's spirit become a great power.

#### The Text Applied

1. *The River of Salvation*.—The gospel is spoken of as a river of salvation. In the book of Revelation we read of a river of life, whose waters issue forth from beneath the throne of God, pure as crystal. On the banks grows the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruit which is for the healing of the nations. Jesus taught in the fourth chapter of John that those who believe in him will have springing up in them a well of living, that is, flowing water, that will be a blessing to all who come in contact with it. This stream or river of salvation is pure in its source and tho it may gather some of the impurities as it flows along life's pathway, may become clouded and muddy, but as it goes on its way, these impurities will settle to the bottom and at last the stream pour its waters into the great ocean of life, pure as when first they issued forth from beneath the throne of God. May this blessed stream cleanse the nations of the earth.

2. *Its Source*.—We have already referred to the source of this river of salvation. It proceeds from beneath the throne of God. In the vision of Ezekiel, the stream issued out from under the threshold of the temple, the house of God. Its source was not in the temple, but the waters came forth from beneath the temple, from the hills thru the house of God. The source of salvation is not *in* the church, but *thru* the church. If the temple stands for the church, then we have the beautiful figure of the river of salvation flowing thru the church, reaching out to the destitute places of the earth, the barren regions and into the wilderness, making the desert to blossom as the rose. The source of salvation is in God from beyond

the church, but God has ordained that thru his church the world should be blest. There is salvation in Christ only. The temple, with all its magnificence and grandeur, had no salvation for the Jews. It was there that God met the people, and so today God is blessing the world thru the organization of the Christian church.

3. *Progressive*.—The stream of salvation widens and deepens as it flows on in its course blessing mankind. Note the gradual enlarging of the stream, verses 3-5. This stream of salvation was very small at first. It began way back in Bethlehem almost 1900 years ago. Thence it spread, thru Galilee and Judea and to the uttermost parts of the earth. That stream is still enlarging, carrying the blessings of salvation into all lands. It has its source in God but its destination is the barren wilderness and the desert places of the earth. Many lands have been made to feel the healing stream, and millions have stooped to drink of this life giving stream, and drinking have found a blessed salvation.

#### Selected Teachings

We are blessed that we may bless.

God's kingdom is larger than our views.

God's favor is the surest way to greatness.

God's purposes for his people are missionary.

We can never sound the depths of God's love.

The river of grace sweetens every life it touches.

The character of a stream is determined by its source.

All the trees of benevolence grow beside the river of life.

The desert cannot swallow the stream whose source is God.

The streams that flow from God's house are always enriching.

Life more abundant always marks the progress of the gospel.

Christians are God's rivers, and they should make their environment blossom.

The world's bitter waters can be sweetened only by the streams of divine grace.

#### Suggestive Questions

1. When and where did this vision occur? Ezek. 40: 1. 2. Where did the river in this vision rise, which way did it flow, and where did it empty? 3. To what does Zechariah (13: 1) liken salvation? 4. What points of comparison are there between this vision and the one given in the last chapter of Revelation? 5. What shows the abundant life-giving power of this river? 6. What is meant by the great sea? See Num. 34: 6. 7. What is pictured in the abundant and perpetual fruitfulness of the trees? 8. Where and how do we learn in this lesson that salvation must be the gift of God? 9. That it is abundant for all who will take it? 10. That the kingdom of God is an ever-increasing kingdom? 11. That the advance of this kingdom will be for the blessing of all nations? 12. That for those who remain outside this kingdom there is no healing? 13. But that all who will may come to the water of life freely?